



## PRESS RELEASE

### *Wine and music in favour of South and North of Italy*

*Thanks to sales of the 2<sup>nd</sup> “Donnafugata Music & Wine Live” CD and cooperation from Consorzio Ulisse and Banca Etica, two craftswomen in the Laboratorio Zen Insieme association were given a microcredit loan.*

*A best-practice model recognized by ANDE Palermo, giving José Rallo an award. Turin based “Don Mario Operti” Foundation was financed too.*

A new history can be written, and it's that of **Claudia Villani** and **Sandra Matarazzo**, two members of the “Laboratorio Zen Insieme” association founded and run by Bice Salatiello, long committed to helping the needy in the outskirts of Palermo.

Putting to work their creative skills and experience gained in the association, these two women are now engaged in handcrafting bags and accessories.

Thanks to microcredit loans to each, Claudia and Sandra were able to join “**Oltre i Luoghi Comuni**” (“Beyond the Commonplace”), a “Made in Palermo” fashion cooperative founded under the aegis of the **Consorzio Ulisse** (Ulysses Consortium), a nonprofit organization uniting 11 social cooperatives that is committed to Sicily's underprivileged.

The nine-member “Oltre i Luoghi Comuni” coop embraces other experiences similar to Claudia and Sandra's, stories of entrepreneurial ambitions struggling against a lack of money and a disadvantaged socio-cultural environment.

Stories that might have remained “untold”, as is the case with people considered credit risks because they lack “guarantees”. But Donnafugata, together with the Consorzio Ulisse and Banca Etica, lent them a concrete hand in the form of the **microcredit** tool: small, low-interest loans given without collateral. A chance to overcome poverty and precarious living, to build one's future autonomously and responsibly.

Having purchased the sewing and trimming machines of their choice, Claudia and Sandra commenced work at a factory in Via Domenico Guerrazzi, in the Zisa district of the Sicilian capital, creating their first pieces for a **handbag collection**. This factory is also where the textiles for “Cangiari” (a Calabrian sustainable-luxury brand mentored by Santo Versace) are hand-woven to make the apparel, bags and shoes shown with the haute couture collection at Fashion Week in Milan.

This was the outcome of **Donnafugata for the Future**, a social-responsibility project based on the teachings of Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, prophet of microcredit loans worldwide. A formula having few precedents in Italy, here espoused by a producer of fine wines esteemed in Italy and abroad.

The funds were raised through sales (in Italian wine shops and restaurants and online) of

the second **Donnafugata Music & Wine Live** CD, ideated by Vincenzo Favara, percussionist for the group and José Rallo's husband. In addition to being co-owner of Donnafugata, José is vocalist for the band, whose disks and concerts offer a repertory ranging from jazz to Brazilian music.

Of the 22,000 euro collected, Banca Etica already used 14,000 for the loans to the two women, enabling them to buy shares in the "Oltre i Luoghi Comuni" cooperative. They will repay the loans over four years at an interest rate of about 4%.

Claudia and Sandra's project was chosen and backed by the **Consorzio Ulisse**, the right partner for assessing feasibility and overseeing start-up and development, very crucial aspects for a territory so meager in opportunities and services.

Above and beyond its limited economic impact and the time needed to get results, the Donnafugata for the Future project has great importance because of the innovatory character of the financing tool, microcredit loans, and the value of the experience, which hopefully will expand to many others.

"This is a great day", said **José Rallo of Donnafugata**, "because we are seeing the initial results of our commitment to microcredit. Purchasers of the CD were behind us on the project, which made a real contribution to making the world we live in fairer. Microcredit loans help people who would otherwise remain on the margins of the work force and society and we hope", she concluded, "that business models oriented towards social responsibility will grow and multiply".

**Luciano D'Angelo, president of the Consorzio Ulisse** says: "Microfinance and microcredit tools are the new frontier on which social efforts will be measuring their abilities to respond to the needs of people lacking financial and relational resources. The Donnafugata for the Future project demonstrates that even in Sicily it's possible to create what elsewhere has already proven successful".

To strengthen its commitment to self-employment endeavors, Donnafugata has also donated 15,000 euro to the **Don Mario Operti Foundation** in Turin - source of the biggest number of microcredit loans to the underprivileged in Italy – which willingly provided its qualified support when the Donnafugata for the Future project was being devised.

It should also be mentioned that this current achievement follows another in 2005, when sales of the first Donnafugata Music & Wine Live CD raised funds for the **Donnafugata for the Heart** project enabling the Pediatric Heart Surgery Department of the Palermo City Hospital to buy equipment for diagnosing and operating on juvenile heart patients.

Donnafugata's commitment to microcredit is considered a remarkable example of best practices, spurring the Palermo chapter of **ANDE** (the Italian Association of Women Voters), headed by Lucia Ajovalasit, to give José Rallo an award. At the presentation of the results of the Donnafugata for the Future project the Italian wine woman received the "ANDE Plaque" for creating a business model in which social responsibility is an identifying element.